

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre – September 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 2d – Sunday afternoon discussion session

Linda: How are you M.?

Question: I feel as though we've been here a long time already. I don't know why but it's just got this timeless feeling. Maybe because it's the same place, the same format. It feels nice. I feel like I've been getting into it more easily this retreat than I have for the last one certainly. Usually I take it quite slowly on the first day but I haven't today.

Linda: So there hasn't been resistance to being here?

Question: No, it feels great. It's definitely made a difference dropping the old name.

Linda: In what way?

Question: I feel like a layer's gone, it feels fresher. It's definitely the right thing.

Linda: Good, it's a brave thing to do.

Question: It still sounds funny but I guess I'll get over that.

Linda: I'm still getting used to calling you M. but it's good if you felt an attachment to the past by using that name. (I did.) You did the right thing.

Linda: How are you L.? (Okay.) You've still got that cold?

Question: Yes, a bit of residual stuff going on but have been feeling okay so far. Some fear coming up here and there. I think it's related to the whole transition in general that I'm doing, and not really having the same reference points as usual.

Linda: You look quite different. There's a completely different feeling about you: you look sharper, stronger. It's really marked, the difference.

Question: I feel a bit different; I feel a bit less of *me* in a way. I think that's been the main thing, not really feeling as much of becoming someone as I usually feel, and feeling a bit disorientated around not doing that. I'm not really sure where it's going and what I'm doing, and that is a question I had for you: it feels a bit destructive, as opposed to whatever the other word is for that.

Linda: Well, you're disassembling who you thought you were. In your situation before it was almost impossible to do that fully because you had these people who'd known you, the pressure of being

you because you were around your parents and they were subtly – I’m not saying they were forcing – but just being in that situation meant that there was this pressure of you being you. To start to take that apart – and I know you were doing that, but there was still that pressure of being you – and changing. And this deep change, which is very difficult to do around your parents because they don’t want you to change. They want you to be who you’ve always been and who they know you as. So you’ve done the right thing.

But I can understand that you’re scared and disorientated. And suddenly you’re in this other place too, geographically, and you haven’t got that safety net any more. So it is – I don’t know I’d call it destructive, it’s not in a negative sense – but you think you’re building up on what you’ve already got but you’re not. You’re disassembling, breaking away from the past, from who you thought you were. And there’s a deep attachment to that, even though you want to be free from it it’s all you’ve known. So you want to keep holding onto it, but you don’t.

Doing something physical like you’re doing is a good thing too. I’m not saying don’t go back to what you were doing – to studying – but you can’t see things like this theoretically, you have to actually do them, to really see what’s there.

Question: Yes, I think that’s what feels a bit disorienting. The same motivation for doing things isn’t really there, and that’s what’s a bit scary too because it leaves me with nothing. And sometimes *this* is really strong and sometimes it’s not strong at all. And when it’s not strong I feel really alone.

Linda: Do you feel alone when you’re here, around people, doing this?

Question: Sometimes, yes. Not as much I suppose.

Linda: So the urge to do it is going to be there strongly sometimes and not strongly other times and it’s the same with everyone. (Right.) It will come and go. So just keep going. You’ve got no other choice. Except to become a famous rock star, you could do that. 😊 But this whole thing makes you feel incredibly vulnerable at times. But you’ll be okay. You’re strong enough now to do it.

Question: I feel like I’m starting again. It’s fairly arduous. I’m completely blown away by the thoughts in the counting. It’s getting better as you settle into the retreat. I had this thing, that’s happened sometimes at home, where I’ve been sitting and I don’t know what I’m doing. The only thing that’s there is I can breathe, but the numbers, all sorts of things, go completely out of my head. It’s not a long lasting thing, it’s just quite disorientating. I just wondered if that’s part of the process.

Linda: You get used to it. It’s the transition from using your memory, your past, thoughts as a reference point, to your body. But there’s still this habit of wanting to know what you’re doing. So that will still come up and it comes up for quite a while. Even when you’re sitting doing what looks like nothing, there’ll still be these questions coming up, “What am I doing? Where am I? What’s going on? Who am I? This is boring. How can I do this? How can I sit for another five days doing this; it’s going to drive me crazy?”

But you don’t need to know. So when you’re sitting and there’s not that stuff happening, you don’t need to know. So just watch it – come back to the breath.

Question: And I don't know whether I've asked this before: it's about breathing intentionally into the belly, because sometimes there's just nothing there to do it, and other times it can be really quite forceful.

Linda: Well, it will change. Sometimes it will feel completely natural and very light and almost not there. Other times – particularly when there's a lot of energy coming into your body – you need to really breathe deeply and almost forcefully – but not so forcefully – but very deliberately into your abdomen, into your belly.

So it will change. Sometimes at the beginning of a sit I used to really do some very deliberate breathing just to set up this intention, "Okay, I'm here." It's almost like a challenge to the mind or whatever's going to happen, saying, "I'll just sit here and put up with whatever's thrown at me, but I'll stay here, I won't move." And one day, the mind gives up.

Question: You promise? 😊 (laughter) I feel like sometimes I'm just trying too hard.

Linda: It's very difficult to try too hard in this. (Is it?) Yes.

Question: Are you sure?

Linda: Yes. (laughter)

Question: Okay I'll take your word for that. I'll keep trying. (laughing) Forcing the issue...?

Linda: You have to! You have to because your mind will come in and say, "No, no, you're doing too much, you don't need to be doing this," and it will look for a gap and get in and undermine you. So yes, it's very difficult to try too hard, to make too much effort.

Question: I get caught in that thing of seeing what's there and allowing myself to see what's there, or relax with it.

Linda: Relax?

Question: Well yes, I get very tense. Well, you've been aware of how tense I get and I wonder if that's just being wound up too much, or that's normal?

Linda: Well, you're going to feel tension. If you're feeling totally overwhelmed and you feel like you can't cope, and you're so edgy you feel like you're going to explode, it is good to just back off a little bit, but just a bit. And that takes effort too.

But the thing is, if you really put a lot of energy into this, if you sit for three hours in the morning, every morning, it's going to do something to you. The pressure – particularly in a retreat – the pressure is going to build up and you are going to feel that tension. And we do get taught, "Tension bad, relaxation good." But most of the time you're not going to feel relaxed doing this – that's not the aim. You want to feel alive and that can involve some tension.

Linda: It's up to you B. You're sitting on the floor in the mornings aren't you? Just sit on the chair and if you fall asleep it's fine. It's up to you though. If you don't like falling asleep, well... You could also alternate: half an hour on the floor, half an hour on a chair.

Question: Yes, I might try that. It seems a bit of a waste, to fall asleep, doesn't it?

Linda: Did you have a sleep at lunch time?

Question: Yes, after lunch I did.

Linda: Good, so half an hour on the floor, half an hour on the chair and that might give you a rest without sending you to sleep.

Question: I think I'm fatigued because I was so sick back in August. I got that flu thing when I wanted to be up at the beach (retreat) with you. I booked my flights and everything but I just couldn't get on a plane, I couldn't get out of bed. It's affected me. I've come through it but I'm not the same as I was before I had it, and it's really quite deeply affected my whole being. I've continued to work and sit and do everything I normally do but something just left me or fell away. It's been pretty big, what's happened. So today I actually took a break this afternoon and I slept because I thought well, I've been so unwell that my body just wanted to be horizontal and I did that. I'm just a bit concerned for the rest of the retreat – I don't want to get into a cycle or a habit of letting it... I don't know it's a combination of feeling intense energetic pressure and also the remnant fatigue.

Linda: Have a rest. If you need to have a rest just have a rest. Don't be worried about that because if you push yourself you'll just get sick again. A lot of people who have had this think they're over it and then they do too much and get sick again. So if you feel to have a rest, have a rest.

Question: Yes, I don't want to burn out.

Linda: No don't. So, particularly in the afternoon, have a sleep, lie down.